

# Special regulations for furbearer trapping on the Refuge

*by Joe Williams*

As the days get shorter, morning temperatures dip below freezing and termination dust starts to appear on the mountains, it's evident that fall is in full swing. This is an exciting time of year for many of us, as the furbearer trapping season is soon approaching on the Kenai Peninsula. While the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge presents trappers with unique opportunities, it also requires an understanding of some special guidelines and regulations.

For those folks planning to trap on Refuge lands this season, I would like to take the opportunity to address a few topics. Individuals 16 years of age or older are required to have a valid state trapping license as well as a special use trapping permit, issued by the Refuge. The Refuge requires that a one-time trapping and snaring orientation class be taken prior to receiving a permit.

This year, the lynx trapping season will be closed on the Kenai Peninsula. Because of this closure, the use of cubby and/or flag sets will not be allowed on the Refuge (However, the use of small cubbies and flag sets with an opening of 7 inches by 7 inches or less, leg hold traps No. 1 ½ or smaller, or No. 120 or smaller Conibear-style traps, are allowed). The Refuge considers a cubby any enclosure, whether natural or constructed, with an opening at one or both ends that is used in conjunction with a trap or snare. A flag set is a visual attractant, such as a CD, foil or flagging, used to attract animals to a trap. The prohibition of flag sets will help reduce the number of lynx accidentally caught in traps.

All trap lines must be at least one mile from public roads, campgrounds, and trailheads. However, trapping for mink and muskrat using small leg-hold traps No. 1 ½ or smaller, and No. 110 or 120 Conibear style traps, is allowed in these areas. The Skilak Lake Recre-

ation Area is closed to all trapping. All traps and snares are required to be identified by the owner with an approved tag or marking that is clearly visible.

Traps and snares are required to be checked regularly. Depending on the type of trap and the Game Management Unit the trap is located in, trap checks are required every four or seven days. Frequent trap checks allows targeted furbearers to be humanely harvested, while ensuring a timely release of uninjured non-targeted species. It also enables trappers to check and inspect their traps to make sure they are working correctly. This is especially important during the "freeze and thaw" cycles, common during Kenai Peninsula winters. It is also a good practice, but not required, to post your trap line with a sign so other outdoor users (and their dogs) can avoid entering areas with active traps.

Another unique requirement for trapping on the Refuge is the prohibited use of "sight exposed bait" within 30 feet of a trap or snare. Bait that is visible from 360 degrees at a height of 3 feet or greater must be at least 30 feet away from a trap or snare. This regulation is aimed at reducing the take of non-targeted species in traps, such as eagles, hawks and other protected birds of prey that hunt by sight.

A trapping and snaring class is scheduled for Saturday, October 25, 2014, from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge office on Ski Hill Road. This class will cover the topics addressed above as well as trapping techniques, fur care and more. The class is free to the public and no pre-registration is required.

*Joe Williams is a law enforcement officer at the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge. You can find more information about the Refuge at <http://kenai.fws.gov> or <http://www.facebook.com/kenainationalwildliferefuge>.*